The Devil

From *Concerning Prayer* (11 authors)

R. G. Collingwood (1889–1943)

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Editor's Preface

"The Devil" is the earliest published work of Collingwood that I know of. It is Chapter XIII of the fourteen chapters of a book called *Concerning Prayer: Its Nature, Its Difficulties and Its Value* (1916). I have this book as a `pdf` file consisting of images of the pages. I made the transcription below, first by means of an OCR program, and then with a lot of editing by hand, since the OCR program made many mistakes.

The title page of the book is the book's page iii, and it lists eleven authors, one of them anonymously: see the References entry [1]. The back (page iv) of the title page reads:

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The Introduction (pages ix–xiii) describes the eleven authors (on page xii) as

> a lady, three laymen, two parish clergymen, two clerical dons—all Anglicans—a Wesleyan theological tutor, a Congregational minister, and an American professor belonging to the Society of Friends.

Th introduction is signed by B. H. S. and L. D., and is dated February 1916 at Cutts End, Cumnor. Presumably B. H. S. is B. H. Streeter; but either "L. D." is a misprint, perhaps for L.

H., Leonard Hodgson; or L. D. is the author of "Pro Christo et Ecclesia" or some twelfth person.

Collingwood's footnotes are numbered by arabic numerals in the original. In the present document, these footnotes are given symbols (∗ and †), so that my own notes can be numbered by arabic numerals. Underlinings are also my own.

Page 449 of the original book is a title page for Collingwood's contribution; it describes him as "Fellow and Lecturer of Pembroke College, Oxford." Page 450 gives a Synopsis: a table of contents showing three levels of divisions of Collingwood's essay. The levels as such are not named; for use of the LaTeX program, I call them chapters, sections, and subsections. The divisions are not indicated in the original text, except that chapters I and II are separated by a space, and chapters II and III are separated by a row of five dots. I have now added all of the names of the divisions to the text itself, although sometimes it is not clear on which side of a transitional paragraph a division should fall.

Bibliography

[1] Author of 'Pro Christo et Ecclesia', Harold Anson, Edwyn Bevan, R. G. Collingwood, Leonard Hodgson, Rufus M. Jones, W. F. Lofthouse, C. H. S. Matthews, N. Micklem, A. C. Turner, and B. H. Streeter. *Concerning Prayer: Its Nature, Its Difficulties and Its Value*. Macmillan and Co., Limited, St. Martin's Street, London, May 1916. Reprinted June and November 1916.

[2] Robert Carroll and Stephen Prickett, editors. *The Bible: Authorized King James Version with Apocrypha*. Oxford World's Classics. Oxford, 2008. First published 1997.

[3] R. G. Collingwood. *Religion and Philosophy*. Macmillan, London, 1916.

[4] R. G. Collingwood. *Speculum Mentis or The Map of Knowledge*. Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1924. Reprinted photographically in Great Britain at the University Press, Oxford, 1946.

[5] R. G. Collingwood. *The Principles of Art*. Oxford University Press, London, Oxford, and New York, paperback edition, 1958. First published 1938.

[6] R. G. Collingwood. *An Autobiography*. Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1978. First published 1939. With a new introduction by Stephen Toulmin. Reprinted 2002.

[7] R. G. Collingwood. *An Essay on Metaphysics*. Clarendon Press, Oxford, revised edition, 1998. With an Introduction and additional material edited by Rex Martin. Published in paperback 2002. First edition 1940.

[8] R. G. Collingwood. *The New Leviathan, or Man, Society, Civilization, and Barbarism*. Clarendon Press, revised edition, 2000. With an Introduction and additional material edited by David Boucher. First edition 1942.

[9] R. G. Collingwood. *An Essay on Philosophical Method*. Clarendon Press, Oxford, new edition, 2005. With an Introduction and additional material edited by James Connelly and Giuseppina D'Oro. First edition 1933.

[10] Harald Höffding. *The Philosophy of Religion*. Macmillan and Co., Limited, St. Martin's Street, London, second edition, May 1914. Translated from the German edition by B. E. Meyer. First edition 1906.

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Introduction—The Devil of orthodoxy and that of Manichaeism

"FROM the crafts and assaults of the Devil, good Lord, deliver us." So we pray; and the prayer certainly answers our need. We feel ourselves surrounded by powers of evil, from which we want to be defended, and the desire expresses itself in the form of a petition for help against the Devil. But most people who have responded to the prayer must have asked themselves how much more than this they meant; whether they believed in a Devil at all, and if so what they imagined him to be like. There is no doubt that common belief has long been tending more and more to discard the idea of a Devil; and yet the idea is orthodox.[1] Does this mean that modern thought is drifting away from orthodox Christianity? Is the disbelief in a Devil only part of that vague optimism, that disinclination to believe in anything evil, that blind conviction of the stability of its own virtue and the perfection of its own civilisation, which seems at times to be the chief vice of the modern world?[2]

[1] That is "orthodox" with a small oh.

[2] Was "vague optimism" prevalent, even during wartime? We may note that Collingwood himself (born in 1889) did not fight. As he reports in *An Autobiography* [6, ch. V, p. 28]:

In part this is so. And a world rudely awakened once more to the conviction that evil is real may come again to believe in a Devil. But if it returns to the same belief which it has gradually been relinquishing, the step will be retrograde. For that belief was neither fully orthodox nor fully true. Orthodox Christianity believes in a Devil who is, as it were, the bad child in [**452**] God's family; the "Devil" in whom people of to-day are coming to disbelieve owes much if not all of his character to the Manichaean fiction of an evil power over against God and struggling with Him for the dominion over man's soul. It may seem surprising that popular thought should confuse Manichaeism with orthodoxy; and it certainly is surprising that theologians should so seldom come forward to correct the mistake. But it is hard for the uninstructed to follow technical theology, and it is perhaps equally hard for the theologian to follow the obscure workings of the uninstructed mind.[3]

A YEAR or two after the outbreak of war, I was living in London and working with a section of the Admiralty Intelligence Division in the rooms of the Royal Geographical Society. Every day I walked across Kensington Gardens and past the Albert Memorial.

In *An Autobiography,* Collingwood does not mention the present essay or the meetings that gave rise to it. In "The Devil," the sentence after the next suggests that not all was cheery at home during the War.

[3]Does Collingwood consider his audience to included the "uninstructed"?

I. Uncritical Arguments for the Existence of the Devil

It is clear then that the vital question is not, Does the Devil exist? but rather, What conception have we of the Devil?[4] Unless we first answer this question it will not be certain whether the spirit into whose existence we are enquiring is the orthodox or Manichaean or indeed any other devil. Further, it is important to determine in what sense we believe in him. A man may, for instance, believe in Our Lord in the sense of believing what history tells us about Him, but yet not believe in Him, in the sense of not believing in His spiritual presence in the Church. So one might believe in the Devil in the sense that one accepts the story of Lucifer as historical; or in the sense that one believes in Lucifer as an evil force now present in the world; and so forth.

[4]This idea is at the core of *An Essay on Metaphysics* [7]. Metaphysics is not the study of reality, but of what we think reality is. Theology or physics (for example) is a study of reality. Metaphysics then studies theology or physics; more precisely it looks for the "absolute presuppositions" underlying this or that science. Properly done then, metaphysics aids science by clarifying what it is really about.

(*a*) Psychological evidence

This way of proceeding[5] may be called the critical method; and it is this which will be adopted in the present essay. But much popular thought on the subject is of a different kind. It concerns itself immediately with the question, Does the Devil exist? without first asking these other questions; and the method it adopts is "scientific" in the popular sense of the word, that is, inductive.[6] It proceeds by searching for "evidence" of the Devil's existence; and this evidence is nowadays drawn chiefly from psychology. As the eighteenth century found the evidences of religion chiefly in the world of nature, so the present [**453**] generation tends to seek them in the mind of man; but the argument is in each case of the same kind.

This psychological argument plays such an important part in popular thought that we must begin by reviewing it; otherwise every step in our criticism will be impeded by the protest that an ounce of fact is worth a ton of theory, and that, however we may theorise, there are facts, positive facts, which prove the existence of the Devil.

Let us then begin by considering these facts; not *in extenso*, for they would fill many volumes and could only be collected by much labour, but in a few typical instances, in order to see what kind of conclusion they yield. The evidence is no doubt cumulative, like all evidence; but a sample will show in what direction, if any, the accumulation tends.

(i.) The will under diabolical influence

The two most striking groups of evidence[7] may be described

[5] That is, trying answer the question of "our" *conception* of the Devil.

[6] The popular is always suspect, but must not be simply rejected.

[7] Thus, and not "evidences," although Collingwood used the plural form

as obsessions and visions. By "obsession" I mean not the morbid phenomena of demoniacal possession, or the "*idée fixe*" of mania, but the sense of the merging of one's own personality in a greater and more powerful self, the feeling that one is overwhelmed and carried away not by impulses within but by the resistless force of another will. This feeling is extremely common in all religious experience. The saint feels himself passive in the hands of God. "This is a trait" (says Höffding, *Philosophy of Religion*, § 28) "very frequently found in mystics and pietists; the more they retain (or believe themselves to retain) their powers of thought and will, the more they tend to attribute to their inmost experiences a divine origin."[8] Höffding's parenthesis looks almost like a suggestion that the feeling only occurs in persons whose will is really in process of decay. But if the suggestion is intended, it is quite indefensible. The weak man, like Shakespeare's Henry VI., may have this feeling; but St. Paul had it even more strongly, and he was certainly not a weak man. **[454]**

This feeling of obsession by a divine power is in fact only an

above (page 13) and will do so again on page 20.

[8] The quotation is perhaps Collingwood's translation; the translation in [10, p. 98] reads:

> It is a constantly recurring trait in mystics and pietists that the more they withhold (or believe themselves to withhold) their own thinking and willing, the more they attribute a divine origin to their inner experiences.

Collingwood's ensuing comments suggest that "retain" may be the better word than "withhold," since withholding one's powers sounds like declining to use them. According to the title page of Höffding's book, he is "Professor in the University of Copenhagen, author of *Outlines of Psychology*, *History of Modern Philosophy*, *Philosophical Problems*, etc." *Wikipedia* gives his dates as 1843–1931 and his name as Harald Høffding.

extreme form of the sensation, which everybody knows, that we are surrounded by spiritual forces which by suggestion or other means influence our wills for good. And the same feeling, both in its rudimentary and extreme forms, exists with regard to evil forces. Children come quite naturally to believe in good and bad angels which draw them in different directions; and this belief may pass through all stages of intensity until we think of our own personality, not as a free will balancing and choosing between suggestions presented to it by angels of light and darkness, but as shrunk to a vanishing-point, the moment of impact between two gigantic and opposed forces. Man becomes the merely sentient battlefield of God and Satan.

The case which immediately concerns us is that of the soul overwhelmed by a spirit of evil; and this is equally familiar to psychology. As the saint represents himself the passive instrument of God, so the sinner feels that he is the passive instrument of the Devil. The saint says with St. Paul: "I live, and yet not I but Christ liveth in me."[9] The sinner replies, from the same source: "It is no more I that do it, but Sin that dwelleth in me."[10]

Here, then, is the first group of evidence for the existence of the Devil; and we must try to determine what it is worth.

[9]The Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the Galatians, chapter 2:

> 20 I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me.

[10]The Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the Romans, chapter 7:

> 20 Now if I do that I would not, it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me.

Collingwood capitalizes "Sin," but it is not so in the edition of the King James Bible that I am using [2].

It will be noticed that the same type of experience serves as evidence in one case for the existence of the Devil, and in the other for the existence of God. We believe in the Devil (it is suggested) because we immediately experience his power over our hearts; and we believe in God for the same kind of reason. But psychology itself, which collects for us the evidence, warns us against this uncritical use of it. It may be that the whole feeling is a morbid and unhealthy one; or it may be that in one case it is natural and healthy, and in the other unnatural and [**455**] morbid. Psychology can describe the feelings which people actually do have; but it cannot tell us whether the feelings are good or bad, trustworthy or misleading, sanity or mania.[11] Telepathy, self-hypnotism, subconscious cerebration, force of education or environment—these and a thousand other explanations are from time to time adopted; and each is, within the limits of psychology, possible, none certain. In point of fact, the psychologist takes whichever view for the moment suits him as a working hypothesis, but the supposed explanation is never more than this, and is generally much less. So the really vital point in the argument is a gap which can only be bridged by the gossamers of flimsiest speculation.

[11] Here is another theme of Collingwood's later work. As he tells it in *The Principles of Art* [5, p. 171 n.] and *An Essay on Metaphysics* [7, ch. X, pp. 106–111], psychology is the science of feeling, and as such, it is empirical. By contrast, ethics and logic are sciences of thought: practical thought and theoretical thought respectively. These sciences of thought can be called "criteriological," because they must account for whether a given instance of thought is correct or successful. The neologism "criteriological" is to be preferred to "normative," because judgments about the correctness of a thought are made by thought itself, not some other authority.

(ii.) Visions of the Devil

The second group of evidence appears at first sight more conclusive. The visions of God, of Our Lord, of angels and of saints which are found in all types of Christianity (and similar visions seem to occur in all other religions) are parallel to visions, no less authentic, of fiends and demons and of the Devil himself.* These sensational forms of religious experience often seem to carry special weight as evidence of the reality of spirits other than our own; but here too the whole argument turns on their interpretation. Are they, in the language of popular philosophy, "subjective" or "objective"?[12]

In order to answer this question, an attempt is sometimes made to analyse them with a view to discovering what they owe to tradition, to the education or surroundings of the per-

*It is not necessary to encumber the text with instances of such familiar experiences; but I should like to refer here, since it has only appeared in a review, to the case of a Roman Catholic priest, described in a series of his own letters in the *British Review*, vol. i. No. 2 (April 1913), pp. 71-95. "On one occasion, when I had retired for the night, a being appeared who addressed me using the most vile language and rehearsing for me in a terrible manner many incidents in my past life. . . . I jumped up and ran at it, making a large Cross in the air, when the figure melted away like smoke, leaving a smell as if a gun had been discharged. . . . When it reappeared I began to recite sentences of the exorcism, and it seemed to me that when I came to the more forcible portions of it the voice grew less distinct. As I proceeded and also made use of holy water the voice died away in a sort of moan. . . . The voice claimed to be that of Lucifer."

[12]I too was disturbed by claims about what was "subjective" or "objective," even before I first read Collingwood. (What I read first was *The Principles of Art* [5], at age 22, in the copy lent me by my high-school art teacher.)

son who sees them.[13] Thus it is found that a vision of the Devil is accompanied by [**456**] a smell of brimstone, and that

[13]In terms of Collingwood's later work, this attempt at analysis fails for not being properly *historical,* in the sense of, for example, *An Autobiography* [6, ch. X, pp. 110–112]:

> I expressed this new conception of history in the phrase: 'all history is the history of thought.' You are thinking historically, I meant, when you say about anything, 'I see what the person who made this (wrote this, used this, designed this, &c.) was thinking.' Until you can say that, you may be trying to think historically, but you are not succeeding. And there is nothing except thought that can be the object of historical knowledge. Political history is the history of political thought: not 'political theory', but the thought which occupies the mind of a man engaged in political work: the formation of a policy, the planning of means to execute it, the attempt to carry it into effect, the discovery that others are hostile to it, the devising of ways to overcome their hostility, and so forth. . . Military history, again, is not a description of weary marches in heat or cold, or the thrills and chills of battle or the long agony of wounded men. It is a description of plans and counter-plans: of thinking about strategy and thinking about tactics, and in the last resort of what men in the ranks thought about the battle.

I pause here to recall from note 2, page 10, that Collingwood himself did not experience the "thrills and chills of battle." Nonetheless, he does acknowledge the "men in the ranks." He continues:

> On what conditions was it possible to know the history of a thought? First, the thought must be expressed: either in what we call language, or in one of the many other forms of expressive activity. . . Secondly, the historian must be able to think over again for himself the thought whose expression he is trying to interpret. . . If some one, hereinafter called the mathematician, has written that twice two is four, and if some one else, hereinafter called the historian, wants to know what he was thinking when he made those marks on paper, the historian will never be able to answer this question unless he is mathematician enough to think exactly what the mathematician thought, and expressed by writing that twice two are four. When he interprets the marks on paper, and says, 'by these marks the mathematician meant that twice two are four', he is thinking simultaneously: (a) that twice two are four, (b) that the mathematician thought this, too; and (c) that he expressed this thought by making these marks on paper. . .

Likewise, it would seem, in reading the letters quoted in Collingwood's last footnote, we are not going to understand them unless we have

one's patron saint appears in the clothes which he wears in the window of one's parish church. But these details prove exactly what the interpreter chooses to make them prove. To the simple, they are corroborative; they prove that the apparition is genuine. To the subtler critic they are suspicious; they suggest that the alleged vision is a merely "subjective" reproduction of traditional images. But the critic is at least no better off than the simple believer. For if my patron saint wishes to appear to me, why should he not choose to appear in a form in which I can recognise him? And if I see the Devil and smell brimstone, may not the coincidence with tradition be due to the fact that when the Devil appears he really does smell of brimstone?

Thus the discussion as to the subjective or objective nature of these visions is involved in an endless obscurity, and whatever answer is given depends on a private interpretation of the facts, which is at once challenged by the opponent. Psychology can collect accounts of visions; but to decide whether they are real or illusory is outside its power. Such a decision can only be reached in the light of critical principles which psychology itself cannot establish.[14] There is nothing in a vision itself,

the experience of being believers like the priest. Or are visions of the Devil too far down the scale of thought from $2 \times 2 = 4$? In any case, Collingwood concludes:

> This gave me a second proposition: 'historical knowledge is the re-enactment in the historian's mind of the thought whose history he is studying.'

[14] After examining the matter for two chapters in *The Principles of Art* [5, chh. VIII & IX, pp. 157–194], Collingwood will conclude:

> This, then, is the result of our examination. Sensa cannot be divided, by any test whatever, into real and imaginary; sensations cannot be divided into real sensations and imaginary sensations. That experience which we call sensation is of one kind only, and is not amenable to the distinctions between real and unreal, true and false,

and therefore there is nothing in a thousand visions, to guarantee its truth or falsity; and therefore the uncritical use of such things as evidences is no more than a delusion.

(*b*) The Devil as a hypothesis to explain evil

There is, however, a second and less crude method of using psychological data. How, it is asked, do we account for the existence of all the world's evil? We are conscious in ourselves of solicitations and temptations to sin; and even if we are not in these temptations directly conscious of the personal presence of a tempter, we cannot account for their existence except by assuming that he is real. We do not, according to this argument, claim direct personal knowledge of the Devil, but we argue to his reality from the facts of life. [**457**] There must be a Devil, because there is so much evil in the world.[15]

> veridical and illusory. That which is true or false is thought; and our sensa are called real or illusory in so far as we think truly or falsely about them. To think about them is to interpret them, which means stating the relations in which they stand to other sensa, actual or possible. A real sensum means a sensum correctly interpreted; an illusory sensum, one falsely interpreted. And an imaginary sensum means one which has not been interpreted at all: either because we have tried to interpret it and failed, or because we have not tried. These are not three kinds of sensa, nor are they sensa corresponding with three kinds of sensory act. Nor are they sensa which, on being correctly interpreted, are found to be related to their fellows in three different ways. They are sensa in respect of which the interpretive work of thought has been done well, or done ill, or left undone.
>
> The common-sense distinction between real and imaginary sensa is therefore not false. There is a distinction. But it is not a distinction among sensa. It is a distinction among the various ways in which sensa may be related to the interpretive work of thought.

[15]Today in some cases the Devil may have been replaced by the Uncon-

We know that our own sins make others sin, and it seems only reasonable to suppose that our sins may in turn be due to an Arch-Sinner, whose primal sin propagates itself in the wills of those who come under his malign influence.

Everything, we believe, must have a cause;[16] and in assigning it to its cause we have, so far as we can ever hope to do so, explained it. A thing whose cause we have not discovered is, we say, unexplained, and one which has no cause is inexplicable; but we refuse to believe that anything is in the long run inexplicable.[17] Evil then—so we argue—must have a cause; and the cause of evil in me can only be some other evil out-

scious.

[16] In *An Essay on Metaphysics* [7, ch. XXXIII, pp. 328–337], Collingwood will trace this belief to a misguided fealty to Kant. Since Newton, physicists have not believed it, at least not in the traditional sense: they look for *laws,* not causes.

[17] Collingwood might seem to agree with this refusal. In the contemporaneous *Religion and Philosophy* [3, pp. 196–197], he observes,

> But monism properly understood is only another word for the fundamental axiom of all thinking, namely that whatever exists stands in some definite relation to the other things that exist.

And yet, saying that everything is related to everything else is not the same as saying it has a cause. But neither, apparently, is it the same as *explaining* everything, since as Collingwood will say below on page 25, "evil neither requires nor admits any explanation whatever."

side myself.[18] And therefore we postulate a Devil as the First Cause of all evil, just as we postulate a God as the First Cause of all good.

But the parallel here suggested is entirely misleading. God and the Devil are not twin hypotheses which stand or fall together. God, as present to the religious mind, is not a hypothesis at all; He is not a far-fetched explanation of phenomena. He is about our path and about our bed; we do not search the world for traces of His passing by, or render His existence more probable by scientific inductions.[19] Philosophy may demand a proof of His existence, as it may demand a proof of the existence of this paper, of the philosopher's friends or of the philosopher himself; but the kind of certainty which the religious mind has of God is of the same kind as that which

[18] In fact, the cause need not be outside oneself. From *An Essay on Metaphysics* [7, ch. XXX, pp. 294 f.]:

> A man is said to act 'on his own responsibility' or 'on his sole responsibility' when (1) his knowledge or belief about the situation is not dependent on information or persuasion from any one else, and (2) his intentions or purposes are similarly independent. In this case (the case in which a man is ordinarily said to exhibit 'initiative') his action is not uncaused. It still has both a *causa quod* and a *causa ut*. But because he has done for himself, unaided, the double work of envisaging the situation and forming the intention, which in the alternative case another man (who is therefore said to cause his action) has done for him, he can now be said to cause his own action as well as to do it. If he invariably acted in that way the total complex of his activities could be called self-causing (*causa sui*); an expression which refers to absence of persuasion or inducement on the part of another, and is hence quite intelligible and significant, although it has been denounced as nonsensical by people who have not taken the trouble to consider what the word 'cause' means.

[19] In short, not all thinking is an attempt to do natural science as it is understood today. The belief that it *is* such an attempt is what causes such anthropological confusions as are discussed in Chapter IV, "Art as Magic," of *The Principles of Art* [5].

we have of ourselves and of other people, and not in any way similar to the gradually strengthening belief in a hypothesis. The two kinds of belief must not be confused. I do not consider the existence of another mind like my own as a highly probable explanation of the voice I hear in conversation with a friend; to describe my belief in such terms would be entirely to misrepresent its real nature. The Devil may be a hypothesis, but God is not;[20] and if we [**458**] find reason for rejecting the above argument for the reality of the Devil we have not thereby thrown any doubt on the reality of God.

The belief in a Devil is supposed to be a hypothesis. But is it a good hypothesis? Does it explain the facts?

There are two questions to which we may require an answer. First, how do I come to think of this sin as a possible thing to do? Secondly, why do I desire to do it? To the first question the hypothesis does supply an answer: but no answer is really needed. My own faculties are sufficient, without any diabolical instruction, to discover that on a given occasion I might do

[20] God is not an assumption, but a foundation of thought. By Collingwood's account in *An Essay on Philosophical Method* [9, pp. 124 f.],

> Divesting [Anselm's] argument of all specially religious or theological colouring, one might state it by saying that thought, when it follows its own bent most completely and sets itself the task of thinking out the idea of an object that shall completely satisfy the demands of reason, may appear to be constructing a mere *ens rationis*, but in fact is never devoid of objective or ontological reference.
>
> ... Clearly [the Ontological Proof] does not prove the existence of whatever God happens to be believed in by the person who appeals to it...
>
> Reflection on the history of the Ontological Proof thus offers us a view of philosophy as a form of thought in which essence and existence, however clearly distinguished, are conceived as inseparable. On this view, unlike mathematics or empirical science, philosophy stands committed to maintaining that its subject-matter is no mere hypothesis, but something actually existing.

wrong if I would.[21]

To the second and much more important question the hypothesis of a Devil supplies no answer at all; and to conceal this deficiency it raises two other questions, each equally hard, and each in point of fact only a new form of the original problem. If evil can only be explained by postulating a Devil, in the first place, what explains the sins of the Devil himself? Secondly, granted that there is a Devil, why do people do what he wants them to do? The first of these questions is not answered by saying that the Devil's sin is a First Cause and needs no explanation; that is, that it was the uncaused act of a free being. The same is obviously true of our own actions; and it was only because this account of them seemed insufficient that we felt compelled to postulate a Devil. But if it is insufficient in our case, how can we guarantee its sufficiency in his?

The other question is even more unanswerable. If the Devil, by some compulsive power, forces us to act in certain ways, then these acts are not our acts, and therefore not our sins; and if he only induces us to act, the question is, why do we let ourselves be induced?[22] If there is a Devil who wants me to do something wrong, his desire is impotent until I choose to fall in with it. And therefore his existence does nothing [**459**] whatever to explain my sin. The hypothesis of a Devil explains nothing; and if the fact which it is meant to explain,

[21] How much of a sinner does Collingwood think he is? Jesus recommended praying, "lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil" (Matthew 6:13). Folk wisdom says, "You can lead a horse to water, but you can't make him drink." Collingwood seems to say that the sinner or the horse can find temptation or water on his own.

[22] By the account in *An Essay on Metaphysics* [7], this "inducing" is a *causing* in the original sense of "cause." It does not imply a *dividing* of responsibility, but a sharing.

the fact of evil, requires an explanation, then the Devil himself requires an explanation of the same kind.

The truth is that evil neither requires nor admits any explanation whatever. To the question, "Why do people do wrong?" the only answer is, "Because they choose to." To a mind obsessed by the idea of causation, the idea that everything must be explained by something else, this answer seems inadequate. But action is precisely that which is not caused; the will of a person acting determines itself and is not determined by anything outside itself. Causation has doubtless its proper sphere. In certain studies it may be true, or true enough for scientific purposes, to describe one event as entirely due to another. But if the Law of Causation is a good servant, it is a bad master. It cannot be applied to the activity of the will without explicitly falsifying the whole nature of that activity. An act of the will is its own cause and its own explanation; to seek its explanation in something else is to treat it not as an act but as a mechanical event.[23] It is hardly surprising that such a quest should end in a confusion greater than that in which it began. Evil, like every other activity of free beings, has its source and its explanation within itself alone. It neither need nor can be explained by the invocation of a fictitious entity such as the Devil.

[23]It will be argued in *An Essay on Metaphysics* [7] that the use of the language of causation in physics is itself the result of anthropomorphism: things in nature must happen by causes, just as we cause one another to do things.

II. Critical Analysis of the Conception of a Devil

In the absence of any results from the method of evidence and hypothesis, we must turn to the only other alternative, the simpler though perhaps more difficult method described above as the method of criticism. Instead of asking whether or not the Devil exists, we must ask what we understand by the Devil, and whether that conception is itself a possible and reasonable one. When we have answered these [**460**] questions we shall perhaps find that the other has answered itself.

(*a*) As an Absolute evil will—

To this critical procedure it may be objected at the outset that the method is illegitimate; for it implies the claim to conceive things which in their very nature are inconceivable. Infinite good and infinite evil are, it is said, beyond the grasp of our finite minds; we cannot conceive God, and therefore neither can we conceive the Devil. To limit infinity within the circle of a definition is necessarily to falsify it; any attempt at conception can only lead to misconception.

Even if this objection were justified, instead of being based on a false theory of knowledge, it would not really affect our question. If the Devil is inconceivable, then we have no con-

ception of him, or only a false one; and there is an end of the matter. But any one who maintains his existence does claim to have a conception of him; he uses the word Devil and presumably means something by it. The objection, if used on behalf of a believer in the Devil, would be no more than a confession that he attaches no meaning to the word and therefore does not believe in a Devil at all. So far as he does believe, his belief is a conception and can therefore be criticised.

(i.) An Absolute good (= divine) will conceivable

Now the idea of God as an omnipotent and entirely good being is certainly conceivable. It is possible to imagine a person who possessed all the power in existence, who could do everything there was to be done, and who did everything well. Whether this conception can be so easily reconciled with others, we do not ask; we are only examining the idea itself. Further, it is an essential element in the conception of God that He should be not perfectly good alone, but also the sole and absolute source of goodness; that He should will not only good but all the good there is. Now it is essential to grasp the fact that whether such a will as this is conceivable or not depends on whether good things are all compatible with one another, or whether [**461**] one good thing may exclude, contradict, or compete with another good thing. If they are all compatible, if the "Law of Contradiction," that no truth can contradict another truth, applies *mutatis mutandis* to the sphere of morality,[24] then all individual good things are parts of one harmonious scheme of

[24] As perhaps it should, if logic and ethics are the sciences of theoretical and practical thought respectively, as in note 11, page 16.

good which might be the aim of a single perfectly good will. If, on the other hand, one good thing is incompatible with another, it follows that they are not parts of a single whole, but essentially in conflict with one another, and that therefore the same will cannot include, that is cannot choose, all at once. For instance, granted that A and B cannot both have a thing, if it is right that A should have it and also right that B should have it, God cannot will all that is good; for one mind can only choose one of two contradictory things.

It seems to be a necessary axiom of ethics that on any given occasion there can only be one duty.[25] For duty means that

[25] Why "seems to be necessary" and not simply "is necessary"? In any case, here are some of the ideas that Collingwood will develop ultimately in Chapter XVII, "Duty," of *New Leviathan* [8]:

> When 'due' and 'duty' first appeared in English . . . they found Germanic synonyms derived from the verb 'owe' already established; in particular the past tense 'ought', where the same reference to a logically past act of incurring debt is implied.
>
> In modern English, consciousness of obligation is distinguished from other forms of consciousness by the name 'conscience' . . .
>
> . . . an obligation may be distributed over various agents. B may 'hold himself responsible' for a debt incurred by A . . .
>
> A still further complication is possible. B finds himself under an obligation; he ascribes its origin to an act on the part of A; he regards it as discharged by a third person C . . .
>
> The importance of this case in the history of the European conception of duty will appear if we call A Adam, B the believer, and C Christ . . .
>
> This is the idea of the Atonement, which has sometimes been denounced as a legal quibble forced upon an alien and inappropriate context. Nothing could be farther from the truth. The idea is an integral part of the ordinary moral consciousness, at least in Christendom; it is perplexing only to a man who is too weak in the head to follow the logic of a case where an obligation is distributed over three agents.
>
> . . .
>
> The special characteristics of duty are (1) determinacy and (2) possibility.
>
> Duty admits of no alternatives . . .
>
> Here duty differs both from right and from utility, each of which is what is called a many-one relation; the ground fits so loosely on the

which a man ought to do; and it cannot conceivably be a duty to do something impossible.* Therefore if I have two duties at the same time, it must be possible for me to do both. They cannot contradict one another, for then one would be impossible and therefore not obligatory. There can be a "conflict of duties" only in the sense that from two different points of view each of two incompatible things seems to be my duty; the conflict disappears when I determine which point of view ought to be for the moment supreme. This does not mean that there is a greater duty which overrides the less; for the distinction between doing and not doing, and between "ought to do" and "ought not to do," is not a question of degree. The one is simply my duty, and the other not my duty. No doubt the latter might have been my duty in a different situation; and it is often distressing to see what good things we might have done [**462**] if the situation, created perhaps by our own or another's folly, had not demanded something else. But here again there are not two duties; there is one and only one, together with the knowledge that in other conditions some other duty would have taken its place.

*It is sometimes perhaps a duty to try to do an impossible thing. But in that case the claims of duty are satisfied by the attempt; and to attempt the impossible is not necessarily itself impossible.

consequent that it fits a number of different alternatives equally well (or equally badly) and never allows you to say about any 'That and no other is the foot that the shoe fits.'

Hence dutiful action, among these three kind of rational action, is the only one that is completely rational in principle; the only one whose explanations really explain; the only one whose answer to the question: 'Why did I do that action?' (namely, 'because it was my duty') answers precisely that question and not one more or less like it.

I note Collingwood's "populism": ridiculing the intellectual who does not understand morality as ordinary folks are said to do.

If it is true that my duty can never contradict itself, it is equally true that my duty cannot contradict any one else's. A may feel it his duty to promote a cause which B feels it right to resist; but clearly in this case one must be mistaken. Their countries may be at war, and they may be called upon by the voice of duty to fight each other; but one country—perhaps both—must be in the wrong. It is possibly a duty to fight for one's country in a wrongful cause; but if that is so it is one's duty not to win but to atone in some degree for the national sin by one's own death.[26]

A real duty, and therefore a real good, is a good not for this or that man, but for the whole world. If it is good, morally good, that A should have a thing, it is good for B that A should have it. Thus all moral goods are compatible, and they are therefore capable of being all simultaneously willed by a single mind. So far, then, the idea of God seems to be a consistent and conceivable notion. Is the same true of the idea of the Devil?

(ii.) but not an Absolute evil will

The Devil is generally regarded as being not only entirely bad, but the cause of all evil: the absolute evil will, as God is the absolute good will. But a very little reflexion shows that this is impossible. Good cannot contradict good, just as truth cannot contradict truth; but two errors may conflict, and so may two crimes. Two good men can only quarrel in so far as their goodness is fragmentary and incomplete; but there is no security that two absolutely bad men would agree. The reverse is true; they can only agree so far as they set a limit to

[26] Did Robert E. Lee do his duty?

their badness, and each undertakes not to thwart and cheat the other. Every really good thing in the world harmonises with every other; but [**463**] evil is at variance not only with good but with other evils.[27] If two thieves quarrel over their plunder, a wrong is done whichever gets it, but no one Devil can will both these wrongs. The idea of a Devil as a person who wills all actual and possible evil, then, contradicts itself, and no amount of psychological evidence or mythological explanation can make it a conceivable idea.

(*b*) As an entirely evil will. Evil is neither—

Our first notion of the Devil must be given up. But we might modify it by suggesting that the Devil does not will that either thief should get the plunder; he desires not our success in evil projects, but simply our badness. He incites the two to fight out of pure malice, not with any constructive purpose but simply in order to make mischief. That one thief should succeed prevents the other thief from succeeding; but there is nothing in the mere badness of the one incompatible with the mere badness of the other. And the badness of each is quite sufficiently shown in the attempt, whether successful or not, to defraud the other.

This brings us to a different conception of the Devil as a person who does, not all the evil there is, but all the evil he can. He is an opportunist; when thieves can do most harm by agreeing, he leads them to agree; when by quarrelling, he

[27] To be at variance with an evil would seem to be good; but then this too conflicts with the notion of absolute evil.

incites them to quarrel. He may not be omnipotent in evil; whatever evil he brings about is at the expense of other possible ills; but at least he is consistently wicked and never does anything good. Is this second idea more conceivable than the first? In order to answer this question we must enquire briefly into the character and conditions of the evil will.

There are two well-established and popular accounts of evil, neither of which is entirely satisfactory. Sometimes evil is said to be the mere negation of good; nothing positive, but rather a deficiency of that which alone is positive, namely goodness; more commonly [**464**] good and evil are represented as different and opposed forces.

(i.) negation of good

The first view contains elements of real truth, and is supported by such great names as that of Augustine, who was led, in his reaction from Manichaeism, to adopt it as expressing the distinctively Christian attitude towards evil.

This view is generally criticised by pointing out that as evil is the negation of good, so good is the negation of evil; either is positive in itself but negative in relation to the other. This criticism is valid as against the verbal expression of the theory, though it does not touch the inner meaning which the theory aims at expressing. But unless this inner meaning is thought out and developed with much more care than is generally the case, the view of evil as merely negative expresses nothing but a superficial optimism, implying that any activity is good if only there is enough of it, that only small and trivial things can be bad, and (in extreme forms of the theory) that evil is only evil from a limited and human point of view, whereas to a fuller and more comprehensive view it would be non-existent. These

sophistical conclusions are so plainly untenable that they force the mind to take refuge in the opposite view.

(ii.) nor the opposite of good

Good and evil, according to this view, are different and opposed forces. If the opposition is imagined as existing between an absolute good will and an absolute bad (as for instance in Manichaeism) we have already shown that it cannot be maintained, for an absolute bad will is inconceivable. The crude antithesis of Manichaeism therefore gives place to a different kind of opposition, such as that between body and soul, desire and reason, matter and spirit, egoism and altruism, and so on *ad infinitum*. To criticise these in detail would be tedious; it is perhaps enough to point out the fallacy which underlies all alike. That which acts is never one part of the self; it is the whole self. It is [**465**] impossible to split up a man into two parts and ascribe his good actions to one part—his soul, his reason, his spirit, his altruistic impulses—and his bad actions to another. Each action is done by him, by his one indivisible will. Call that will anything you like; say that his self is desire, and you must distinguish between right desires and wrong desires; say that it is spirit, and you must add that spirit may be good or bad. The essence of his good acts is that he might have done a bad one: the essence of his bad, that he—the same he—might have done a good. It is impossible to distinguish between any two categories one of which is necessarily bad and the other necessarily good. We constantly try to do so; we say, for instance, that it is wrong to yield to passion and right to act on principle. But either we beg the question by surreptitiously identifying passion with that which is wrong and principle with that which is right, or we must confess

that passions may well be right and that principles are very often wrong. The moral struggle is not a struggle between two different elements in our personality; for two different elements, just so far as they are different, cannot ever cross each other's path. What opposes desires for evil is not reason, but desires for good. What opposes egoism—a false valuation of oneself—is not altruism but, as Butler long ago pointed out, a higher egoism, a true valuation of oneself.

Evil, and therefore the Devil, is not a mere negation, not the shadow cast by the light of goodness. Nor is it identical with matter, body, desire, or any other single term of a quasi-Manichaean antithesis. It is something homogeneous with good, and yet not good; neither the mere absence of goodness nor the mere presence of its opposite. We do evil not through lack of positive will, nor yet because we will something definitely and obviously different from good. The first alternative breaks down because doing wrong is a real activity of the will; the second because doing wrong for the sake [**466**] of wrong, if it happens at all, is a very small part of the evil that actually exists.

(iii.) but the counterfeit of good. Hence it depends on good, and total badness is impossible. The evil will is self-contradictory

It is surely the case that the immense majority of crimes are done under a kind of self-deception. We persuade ourselves that this act, which is generally considered a crime, is really when properly understood, or when seen in the light of our peculiar circumstances, a fine and praiseworthy act. Such a plea is not in itself wrong. It is a duty, indeed it is the spring

of all moral advance, to criticise current standards of morality and to ask whether this may not be a case where the current rule fails to apply.[28] But though this criticism is not necessarily wrong but is the very essence of right action, it is not necessarily right but is the very essence of evil.[29] To set oneself against current beliefs and practices is the central characteristic of all heroes, and it is equally the central characteristic of all criminals; of Christ and of Lucifer. The difference is not psychological; it is not that the hero has noble and exalted sentiments while the criminal gives way to ignoble and debased passions. The essence of crime is the pride of Lucifer, the feeling of nobility and exaltation, of superiority to convention and vulgar prejudice. When we do wrong, we believe, or persuade ourselves, that the opinion which is really the right one, really the expression of moral truth, is a mere fiction or convention; and we represent ourselves as rebels and martyrs for a noble cause.

It may be that some crimes have not this characteristic. At times, perhaps, we act wrongly in the clear understanding that we are doing wrong, while still attaching the right meaning to that word. But when we say, "I know it is wrong, but I intend to do it," we generally mean by "wrong" that which is commonly called wrong; wrong in public opinion, but to our

[28] This is because conformity to a *rule,* that is, being *right,* is only a partial explanation for action, as in note 25, page 28. But Collingwood is not at present distinguishing verbally between dutiful and right action.

[29] Collingwood seems to suggest that doing one's duty is the essence of evil (as well as the essence of good). If action according to rule is thought of as being *caused* by the rule, then it is not really action, and so it is not good or evil ("action is precisely that which is not caused," page 25). Usually we live on autopilot, so to speak. Good or evil arises when we question what we are doing, though the question may only be implicit in our action.

own superior understanding right. Or, what is really the same thing, we admit that it is "morally wrong" but hold that it has a value other than, and transcending, that of morality; a meaningless phrase if we recollect [**467**] that morality is simply that kind of value which actions possess, so that to judge them by another standard is impossible. Any other standard we apply is morality under another name.*

The essence of evil, then, is that it should set itself up not in opposition, open and proclaimed, to good as good; but that it should set itself up to be the good, standing where it ought not in the holy place and demanding that worship which is due to good alone. Evil is not the absence of good nor yet the

*People say, for instance, "So-and-so ought to think less about morality, and more about his neighbours' happiness," or the like. But this language means that to consult his neighbours' happiness is a moral duty which So-and-so has been neglecting. Here, as in the similar case of polemics against "morality," the word is misused for "that which people wrongly imagine to be morality." Those writers who expect or exhort mankind to develop into a life beyond good and evil do not quite realise that they regard it as a good thing to be "beyond good and evil." To believe that any standard is the right one to act upon implies believing, or rather is believing, that it is a moral standard.

opposite of good; it is the counterfeit of good.*

Now if this is so, it follows that nobody can be entirely and deliberately bad. To be enslaved by a counterfeit of goodness we must know goodness itself; there must be an element of real good in a will before it can ever become evil. And that element of good persists throughout, and is the basis of all hopes of redemption. The force and life of evil comes from the positive experience of good which underlies the evil, [**468**] which alone makes evil possible. Therefore the Devil, just as he cannot will all the evil there is, cannot be fundamentally and perfectly wicked; he is not a wicked angel but a fallen angel, preserving in his fall the tattered remnants of the glory that was his, to be at once the foundation and the abatement

*It goes without saying that counterfeit goods or false ideals, like true ones, are seldom the peculiar property of any one individual; they are often, though of course not necessarily, common to a family or class or sex or nation. This fact has, however, no bearing on the point at issue; and is only quoted here because of a false value very often attached to it. The ideals I act on are, wherever I get them from, mine; that they should happen to be shared by others is irrelevant. But, it is said, I get them as a matter of fact from others; I have them because others have them; the influence of a corrupt public opinion is of the utmost importance in any concrete account of the evil will.—This language is so common that it is worth while to point out the fallacy it contains. It is another instance of a fictitious entity (in this case "Society") posing as the "explanation" of evil. The alleged explanation contains (1) a vicious circle and (2) a fatal gap. (1) "Society" consists of Tom, Dick and Harry: if I "get my ideals" from them, where do they "get" theirs from? Presumably from me; unless it is supposed that ideals never change at all, but are simply transmitted *en bloc* from generation to generation. (2) If other people's ideals are bad, they may on that account equally well reproduce themselves in me, or rouse me to reject them. Man's relation to his moral environment is just as much negative as affirmative; and therefore no detail of his moral character can ever be explained by reference to such environment.

of his badness. It is this contradiction in the nature of the evil will that Dante has in mind when, coming to the centre and heart of the Inferno, he finds its lord not triumphant, not proud and happy in his kingdom, but inconsolably wretched.

> Con sci occhi piangeva, e per tre menti
> Gocciava 'l pianto e sanguinosa bava.*

And Milton knows that Satan's mind, in the thought of lost happiness and lasting pain, was filled with torments of huge affliction and dismay; confounded though immortal.

(*c*) The Devil is neither—

In these and kindred accounts of the Devil we recognise a very real and profound truth. But of what kind is this truth? Is it a true portrait of an actual, historical person called Lucifer or Satan who at some time in the remote past rose against God and set himself up as leader of an angelic rebellion? Or is it the true description of a real spirit who, whatever his past history, lives and rules the forces of evil now? Or lastly, is its truth mythical truth? Is Satan simply the type of all evil wills?

(i.) a historical person (Lucifer) nor

In answer to the first of these questions we can only say that such a thing may well have happened. There may have been,

**Inferno*, c. xxxiv. lines 53-4. "With six eyes he wept, and down three chins trickled his tears and blood-stained slaver." Stained, that is, with the blood of the traitors whose limbs he was mangling. *Paradise Lost*, c. 1.

at some definite time in the past, war in heaven, Michael and his angels fighting against the dragon and his angels. We know of countless people who have at various times set up false ideals of truth and of right, and have worshipped those false gods, instead of the true God. And it may be that there [**469**] was once a person, not a human being but a being of some kind, whose rebellion was of surpassing magnitude and weight, like Arianism among the Christian heresies; and that his name has somehow come down to us as Lucifer. If this is presented as mere history it is not possible to prove or disprove it. But in speaking of the fall of Lucifer do we really mean this, and only this?

It would appear that we mean both more and less. Less, because we hardly believe that Lucifer's fall took place at any actual date. It was "before the beginning of the world"; it has no definite place in our time-series. To ask its date seems incongruous, not because we have no evidence for dating it, but because we do not regard it as quite an event in history. But we also mean more; for we regard Lucifer or the Devil not as a character in past history only, a pretender like Perkin Warbeck,[30] but as a spiritual force about us here and now. His fall is somehow repeated and represented, not merely imitated, in the apparition and collapse of any great force working for evil. There may have been a historical Lucifer, but it is not he, it is no historical person simply as such, of whom we speak as the Devil.[31]

[30] Perkin Warbeck (c. 1474–1499), pretender to the English throne during the reign of Henry VII (*Wikipedia*).

[31] But then, as Collingwood will say in such later works as *An Autobiography,* history is not the study of the past as such, but of the remains of the past in the present.

(ii.) a supreme evil will now actual

Is he then the supreme evil power? Is he the Manichaean anti-God whose spirit informs the communion of sinners as the Holy Spirit informs the communion of saints? No; for we have already seen that there can be no supreme power which directs and controls all the forces of evil. That army is one without discipline, without a leader; the throne of the kingdom of evil is empty, and its government is anarchy. Evil wills exist, but they owe no allegiance to any supreme spirit. They worship evil, they worship the Devil; but their worship is idolatry because they themselves create its god. If the Devil were a real ruler, then worship of him would be within its limits a true religion; but it is false religion, the worship of a phantom. [**470**]

(iii.) but a myth (type) of all evil wills or devils

It remains that we should regard the Devil as a myth. This does not mean that the descriptions of him are untrue, or that they are the product of that fancy whose creations are neither true nor false but merely imaginary. A myth is capable of, and is judged by, a certain kind of truth. Mythology is to the naïve consciousness a form of history; the myth of Herakles to a simple-minded Greek was the biography of a real person. But, as such, it was false. Mythology does not contain historical truth, though it presents itself in a historical form. The truth it contains may perhaps be described as typical truth. Herakles is the type of all strong men who devote their strength to the bettering of human life; and the truth of the myth lies precisely in this, that the story truly presents the real character of the type. This is the difference between mythology and art, the

work of the imagination. The mythical person is never quite an individual. He is always something of an abstraction, a type rather than a person. In art, on the other hand, the person is not a type but an individual. Hamlet is not typical of any class of men, as Herakles is; he is simply his unique self. An art which forgets the individual and presents the type, an art which generalises, has forgotten its artistic mission and has become mythology.

The Devil is in this sense a myth. He rebels against God and sets himself up for worship, because all evil is rebellion against the true good and the worship of false ideals, of counterfeit goods, of idols. He rules over the kingdom of darkness, and yet his rule is only a mockery, because there is no real unity in evil, though there is a fictitious and spurious unity. He is a laughing-stock to the saints, because evil once seen as evil has no more power over the mind; it only controls those who worship it, who reverence it as good. He torments souls in hell, and is himself tormented, because the evil will is divided against itself and can never reach the unity and harmony which alone characterise [**471**] the good. His strength lies in his infinite disguises; he comes in countless alluring forms, which at the word of power vanish leaving his own naked horror of impotent rage, because evil is never seen as evil by its worshippers; they clothe it in all the forms of beauty and sincerity and virtue, which must be torn away by the wind of truth leaving the idolater face to face with the reality of the thing he has worshipped till he turns from it in loathing. Christian demonology is a storehouse of observations, not as to the life-history of a single Devil or even of many devils, but as to the nature, growth and development of the evil will.

Are there, then, no spiritual forces which influence man for evil? Are the malign spirits which surround us with tempta-

tions a mere mythological description of our own inner wickedness?

There certainly are spiritual forces of evil. But by "spiritual" we do not necessarily mean other than human; still less do we refer to a class of ambiguous beings sometimes physical and sometimes "dematerialised"; the "spirits" of vulgar superstition. There may be personal minds other than those we know as God, man and the lower animals; and if so, they are doubtless good or bad. But, as we saw, no such beings need be postulated to account for human sin; nor would they account for it, if they existed. The spirits whose evil we know are human spirits; and the forces of evil with which we are surrounded are the sins of this human world. The Devil is an immanent spirit of evil in the heart of man, as God is an immanent spirit of goodness. But there is this great difference, that God is transcendent also, a real mind with a life of His own, while the Devil is purely immanent, that is, considered as a person, non-existent.

Nor is it even entirely true to say that the Devil is immanent. For that would imply that evil is a principle one and the same in all evil acts; and this it cannot be, for while good acts all form part of one [**472**] whole of goodness, evil acts have no parallel unity. There is no communion of sinners; they live not in communion with one another, but in mutual strife. There is not one immanent Devil, but countless immanent devils, born in a moment and each in a moment dying to give place to another, or else to that re-entering spirit of good which is

always one and the same.[32]

The devils within us are our own evil selves. But this does not mean that they cannot come, in a sense, from without. When one man infects another with his own badness, it is quite literal truth to say that a devil goes from one to the other; and there may be a kind of unity, a kind of momentary kingdom of evil, when the same devil seizes upon a large number of people and they do in a crowd things which no man would do by himself. There may even be a more lasting kingdom where an institution or a class keeps alive for generations a false ideal. And since evil influences may affect us from books, from places, from the weather, we tend naturally to think of devils as inhabiting these things. Are we here back again in mythology? There really is a devil—a spirit of evil—in a bad person; is there one, in the same sense, in a wood or in the east wind?

It is a difficult question to answer, since it depends on how far each of these things has a self, and how far the selfhood which to us it seems to have is really conferred upon it by our own thought. To us the east wind is a definite thing; and so to us it can be a devil. But is it a definite thing to itself? Is the influence it exerts upon us its own influence, or is it only

[32]Compare the language of *The New Leviathan* [8, p. 33]:

> **5. 5.** Another ambiguity about feelings is that they are *evanescent.* They are things that begin to perish as soon as they begin to exist. They may be described as one of his princes, we are told, described the life of man to King Edwin: 'like the swift flight of a sparrow through the hall wherein you sit at supper with your commanders and ministers, a good fire in the midst, while storms of rain and snow rage abroad; the sparrow, flying in at one door and out at once from the other, vanishes from your eyes into the dark winter night from which it came. So the life of man appears for a short space, but what went before, and what is to come after, we know not at all' (Bede, *Hist. Eccl.* 11. xii).

the reflexion in it of our own nature? Perhaps it is best to leave the question open.[33] There may be devils in places and in things which we generally regard as inanimate; but those which we know exist in the human mind. Of these the Devil of orthodoxy is a type or myth; a myth not in the colloquial sense in which the word means a fiction or illusion, but in the [**473**] proper sense which we have explained above. And the truth of the orthodox belief consists in the fact that it does with perfect accuracy describe the real nature of the evil will. But as soon as the mythical nature of the belief is forgotten, as soon as the Devil is taken not as a type of all evil wills but as their actual supreme ruler, then the step has been taken from truth to superstition, from Christianity to Manichaeism.[34]

[33] In the last chapter, "Miracle," of *Religion and Philosophy* [3, p. 212], Collingwood concludes that everything that happens is an act of will:

> Granted—and by now we seem bound to grant—that a ball, let drop, falls in virtue not of an inexorable law but of a volition, and that the volition might will otherwise, we may still say that the possibility of a ball's thus changing its habits need not seriously disturb our practical calculations.

[34] By the account in *Speculum Mentis* [4, pp. 122–127], religion confuses the myth for the idea behind it:

> The key to the comprehension of religion is a principle which in religion itself exists only implicitly. This principle is the distinction between symbol and meaning.
>
> Religion is a structure of sensuous or imaginary elements, like art, and—for that matter—like every other form of consciousness. These elements in religion take the form partly of mythological pictures and narratives, partly of acts of worship; these two being the objective and subjective sides of the same reality. . .
>
> If. . . we say, 'To-day I will glorify God by weeding my garden or playing tennis instead of going to church,'. . . our parish priest will reply that God has appointed his own means of grace, which to neglect is to neglect God. . .
>
> But the strange thing is that this very attitude, irreligion appearing in the guise of religion, is typical of religion itself in its highest manifestations. . .

III. Application to Prayer—

(*a*) Idolatry or devil-worship is the worship of the immediate self as it is (creation of a god in man's image)

How does all this affect the theory and practice of prayer? "The Devil" in any given case is simply the person who is sinning; the wickedness into which he has made himself. Therefore devil-worship is first and primarily self-worship. Self-worship is not necessarily bad; the "religion of humanity" may mean the worship of God as revealed in and through human goodness. But in that case it is not mere self-worship, but the worship of the God immanent in ourselves. Worship of the self pure and simple must always be devil-worship, for it is only the bad self that can be called self pure and simple. The good self is always something more than self; it is self informed and directed by the spirit of God. Man is only alone in the world when he has expelled the spirit of God from his heart and lives a life of evil; for there is no great central power of evil upon which he can then depend as in the alternative case he depends on God. The vacant sanctuary can only be filled with an idol created by man for his own worship; and this idol is the Brocken-spectre

on the fog, the gigantic shadow of man himself when he turns away from the sunlight.

Idolatry, self-worship and devil-worship are one and the same thing; and they are identical with evil in general. For that false ideal which, in evil, takes the place due to the true ideal or God, is always our self, or rather a magnified reflexion of our self. Intellectual evil consists in setting up that which I believe as the standard of truth, whereas I ought rather to test and [**474**] if necessary reject my beliefs by comparing them with reality. Moral evil consists not so much in yielding to desires which I know to be wrong as in erecting my moral standards and judgments into the sole test of rightness. In every case alike evil arises when man takes himself, exactly as he stands, for the measure of all things; for in that case he is setting up a god in his own image and worshipping idols.

(*b*) True worship is self-creation in the image of God

True religion lies not in making God in our image, but in making ourselves in God's image; for God alone exists, and man is only struggling into existence for good or evil. In order to attain to any existence worth having, we must bear in mind that truth, reality, God, are real things existing quite independently of our individual life and private opinions; and an opinion is no less private if it happens to be shared by the whole human race. The type of all false religion is to believe what we will to believe, instead of what we have ascertained to be true; supposing that reality must be such as to satisfy our desires, and if not, go to, let us alter it. This is no ultimate, inexplicable fact; it follows necessarily from the truth

that man's nature is as yet unformed, incomplete; it is, in the great phrase of an English philosopher,* "in process of being communicated to him"; and in that incomplete shape it is incapable of being the standard of anything. It is itself in need of a standard, and that standard, which for science is Reality, for religion is God.

Man's life is a becoming; and not only becoming, but self-creation. He does not grow under the direction and control of irresistible forces. The force that shapes him is his own will. All his life is an effort to attain to real human nature. But human nature, since man is at bottom spirit, is only exemplified in the absolute spirit of God. Hence man must shape himself in God's image, or he ceases to be even human and becomes diabolical. This self-creation must also be [**475**] self-knowledge; not the self-knowledge of introspection, the examination of the self that is, but the knowledge of God, the self that is to be.[35] Knowledge of God is the beginning, the centre and end, of human life.

(*c*) This implies knowledge of God, *i.e.* communion with Him or prayer

A painter makes his picture perfect by looking back from moment to moment at the vision which he is trying to reproduce.

*T. H. Green.

[35]Collingwood has an issue with introspection. See *New Leviathan* [8, ch. XI, p. 77]:

> The importance of the distinction between true and false desires becomes evident as soon as one reflects on the importance for all practical life of 'knowing what you want'. Someone completely in the grip of confusion might say: 'Important no doubt, but childishly easy: all you need is introspection (meaning reflection), and that gives you infallibly the right answer.' But reflection does not give you any

A scientist perfects his theory by testing it at every point by the facts of nature. So the religious life must come back again and again to the contemplation of its ideal in God. But God is a person, not a thing; a mind, not an object. We contemplate objects, but we do not contemplate persons. The attitude of one mind to another is not contemplation but communion; and communion with God is prayer. Prayer may not be the whole of religion, but it is the touchstone of it. All religion must come to the test of prayer; for in prayer the soul maps out the course it has taken and the journey it has yet to make, reviewing the past and the future in the light of the presence of God.

answer at all, let alone an infallible one.

The 'Vanity of Human Wishes' does not lie in men's desiring what is not to be had or what, if obtainable, is unobtainable by themselves. It lies in their being mistaken as to what they want . . .